

## *Astragalus kentrophyta* Gray var. *douglasii* Barneby

thistle milk-vetch

Fabaceae (Pea Family)

**Status:** State Possibly Extirpated

**Rank:** G5TXSX, USFWS Species of Concern

**General Description:** Adapted from Barneby (1964): This perennial herb is sprawling or densely matted and up to 6-1/3 in. (16 cm) long. The stems are branching, woody at the base, and almost gray or white due to short, fine hairs. The internodes (portions of stems between leaf nodes) are mostly less than 1/3 in. (8 mm) long. The leaflets are hairy on both sides. The lowest stipules (leaf like appendages at the base of the petioles) are short and fused into a 2-toothed sheath, while the upper stipules are lanceolate and fused at the base. The leaves have 5-7 linear-lanceolate leaflets, each with a small spine at the tip of the leaf. The calyx is 1/8 in. (4.7-5.2 mm) long; the tube is 1/16 in. (2.2-2.4 mm) long with small spiny teeth that are 1/16 in. (2.3-3 mm) long. The petals are whitish. The upper petals are narrowly egg-shaped and about 1/4 in. (5.8 mm) long by 1/8 in. (3.8 mm) wide. The 2-seeded pods are lanceolate in profile, very slightly incurved, 1/4 in. (5-5.5 mm) long and 1/16 in. (2 mm) in diameter.

**Identification Tips:** No other *Astragalus* in Washington has spines on the leaflets and calyx like *Astragalus kentrophyta*. No other varieties of *Astragalus kentrophyta* are known to occur in Washington. The varieties that occur in states adjacent to Washington are var. *jessiae* and var. *implexus*. The hairs of var. *jessiae* are obviously attached at the middle, the corolla is whitish with pink or lilac-tinged upper petals, and there are 2-3 seeds per pod, while the hairs covering var. *implexus* are attached at the base, the corolla is blue or purplish, and there are 5-8 seeds per pod. *A. kentrophyta* var. *douglasii*, however, has hairs that are attached at the base but sometimes attached at the middle, a whitish corolla without pink or blue tinges, and 2 seeds per pod.

**Phenology:** The taxon was collected while flowering in June. The duration of flowering is unknown.

**Range:** This regionally endemic taxon is known only from extremely vague historical collection records. According to Barneby (1964) the taxon was, "very likely within or near the Great Bend of the Columbia River, southeastern Washington, or perhaps adjoining Oregon."

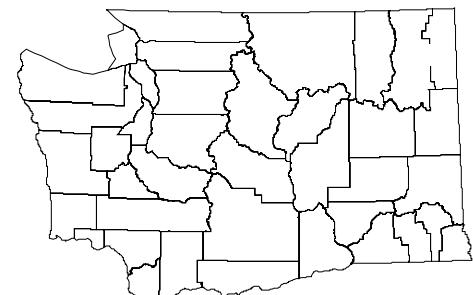
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Known distribution of  
*Astragalus kentrophyta*  
var. *douglasii*  
in Washington



● Current (1980+)

○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Image provided courtesy of the New York Botanical Garden Virtual Herbarium

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**Habitat:** Barneby (1964) suggests that the taxon occurred on sandy ground, on dunes or eroded riverbanks at low elevations. Such sites typically have low vegetative cover.

**Ecology:** Little is known of the ecology of this taxon.

**State Status Comments:** This taxon is known from less than five historical herbarium specimens and has not been seen since 1883. The original habitat of the taxon may have been flooded from the damming of the Columbia River. *Astragalus kentrophyta* var. *douglasii* may be extinct in both Washington and Oregon.

**Inventory Needs:** An intensive search should be conducted for this taxon.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** Threats cannot be identified until there is a known occurrence site. Any sites where the taxon is found should be managed to prevent disturbance at least until more is known about its ecological requirements.

### References:

- Barneby, R.C. 1964. *Atlas of North American Astragalus*. Memoirs of the N.Y. Botanical Garden. 13:1-1188. Bronx, N.Y.
- Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1961. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest Part 3: Saxifragaceae to Ericaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 614 pp.
- Hitchcock, C.L. & Arthur Cronquist. *Flora of the Pacific Northwest*. 1973. University of Washington Press. Seattle, WA. 730 pp.